



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FREE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR RURAL PUPILS

HUXLEY's famous ideal of the free-school system, a ladder from gutter to university, has come near to realization in most of our American states. The free school's triumph over the fee school is all but universal ; and we tell with just pride how even the child of poverty can make his way to the highest places in scholarship. But one part of the ladder still remains defective, and for rural communities absent altogether.

The American free-school system offers to practically all the people everywhere free instruction for children in the elementary grades. If the people are fortunate enough to live in cities or villages, their children have also free instruction in the secondary grades, since in all sections of the country free high schools are maintained in and for the cities. But the free-school opportunities of the country boy and girl have generally come to an abrupt end with the elementary course. True, the state universities have offered them college instruction if they could somehow climb over the gap between the grammar school and the college.

One by one the remaining imperfections in our free-school system come up for consideration and remedy. In their turn, we Americans attack our public problems in what seems to us the order of their importance and need. To some of us this question of secondary education for rural pupils has seemed to wait beyond its rightful time. But its hour has struck at last, and it is safe to say that few questions of educational administration have been receiving more general attention than this one, within the last few years. This attention has, however, been given with but little ostentation ; and it will not be strange if some should express surprise to hear it ranked among the prominent educational problems of the day. Each state seems to have attacked the problem in its own way and with little regard to what other states were doing. The movement has received its impetus less from the

great educators of the nation than from the teachers and people of the several states. Thus, almost unknown to each other, impelled by inward conditions rather than by theories impressed from without, a dozen states have been seeking some way to fill in for their rural pupils the high-school rounds of the free-school ladder.

Eleven years ago in the council of the National Educational Association there was presented and discussed a valuable report upon the opportunities of the rural population for higher education. The report bore most directly, of course, upon college preparation, and took the form of an argument for county high schools. A great deal of valuable information was collected bearing upon the conditions at that time in the different states. That inquiry and report no doubt had its influence in bringing about the present remarkable interest in the problem before us.

The time has certainly come for a thorough study of the present status of this movement. The editor of the SCHOOL REVIEW has invited the writer to undertake on behalf of this journal an investigation of the conditions prevailing in the different states in reference to this matter at the close of the century. To this inquiry the present article may be considered a prefatory statement. A brief preliminary survey of the subject at this time will no doubt interest many readers, and perhaps facilitate their coöperation in the fuller investigation contemplated.

Quite various are the plans adopted or advocated in different states. I shall undertake to describe briefly the more important and typical.

1. *Union high schools*, maintained jointly by neighboring rural districts, often with transportation of pupils at public cost. The districts thus uniting for high-school purposes may be either a group of country districts only, or a village district with several adjacent country districts. A number of states have laws authorizing such union high schools, and localities adopting them have been greatly benefited; but the total territory thus organized is so small a part of such states as to make this plan alone seem inadequate to meet the great general demand for

free rural secondary education. There seems to be no reason however, why this plan should not be authorized and encouraged by every state for localities which prefer it.

2. *Township high schools.*—States in which the township is the unit for taxation and school purposes are gradually adopting laws permitting townships to establish high schools at convenient central locations. This plan is essentially a form of the preceding, and the remarks made in that connection apply here. An interesting variation of this plan contemplates the sale of all the school sites and houses in the township, and the establishment of a central graded school including a high school, with provision for the transportation of pupils at public expense.

An admirable investigation and report on the transportation of rural pupils at public expense has recently been made by Professor A. A. Upham of the State Normal School, Whitewater, Wis. It has been printed as a bulletin of information by the state superintendent of Wisconsin from whom it can no doubt be obtained. Professor Upham's summary is as follows :

From the reports, both printed and written, I gather the following summary of advantages accruing from the plan of transportation of rural school children at public expense :

1. The health of the children is better, the children being less exposed to stormy weather, and avoiding sitting in damp clothing.
2. Attendance is from 50 to 150 per cent. greater, more regular, and of longer continuance, and there is neither tardiness nor truancy.
3. Fewer teachers are required, so better teachers may be secured and better wages paid.
4. Pupils work in graded schools and both teachers and pupils are under systematic and closer supervision.
5. Pupils are in better schoolhouses, where there is better heating, lighting, and ventilation, and more appliances of all kinds.
6. Better opportunity is afforded for special work in music, drawing, etc.
7. Cost in nearly all cases is reduced. Under this is included cost and maintenance of school buildings, apparatus, furniture, and tuition.
8. School year is often much longer.
9. Pupils are benefited by widened circle of acquaintance and the culture resulting therefrom.
10. The whole community is drawn together.
11. Public barges used for children in the daytime may be used to transport their parents to public gatherings in the evenings, to lecture courses, etc.
12. Transportation makes possible the distribution of mail throughout the whole township daily.

13. Finally, by transportation the farm again as of old becomes the ideal place in which to bring up children, enabling them to secure the advantages of centers of population and spend their evenings and holiday time in the country in contact with nature and plenty of work, instead of idly loafing about town.

We are in the midst of an industrial revolution. The principle of concentration has touched our farming, our manufacturing, our mining, and our commerce. There are those who greatly fear the outcome. There were those who prophesied disaster and even the destruction of society on the introduction of labor-saving machinery. We have adjusted ourselves to the new conditions thus introduced. Most of us believe that we shall again adjust ourselves to the new industrial conditions. The changes in industrial and social conditions make necessary similar changes in educational affairs. The watchword of today is concentration, the dominant force is centripetal. Not only for the saving of expense but for the better quality of the work must we bring our pupils together.

3. *County high schools.*—In most of the central and western states the county is the chief corporate unit of local government and taxation. Several of these states have provided by law for high schools under county support and control. Much has been said in favor of this plan. Reference has already been made to the argument made in its favor at the Nashville meeting of the National Educational Association. There seems to be good reason why every state should authorize such schools for counties where the problem can be solved best in this way. But so far, notwithstanding favorable legislation in a number of states, it appears that very few such schools are actually in successful operation; and in a state which relies upon this method alone generations will probably pass before any general extension of free high-school privileges to country pupils will be realized. The chief difficulties in getting such schools started seem to be :

a. Rivalry of cities or towns for location ; each opposing the plan if the probable location would be at a rival town.

b. The appearance of duplicating expensive plants at the same location—the city where the school is located already having, as a rule, a good high school of its own.

c. Inaccessibility from remote parts of the county.

d. The additional difficulty, which results from those already mentioned as well as from other causes, of securing a vote for the establishment of the county high school and for the special taxation required.

4. *State aid for city high schools*, approved by state educational authorities, upon condition of providing free tuition. This plan has solved the problem for many parts of Minnesota, and proves very acceptable there, where such city high schools in all parts of the state are thus open to all comers. This method tends to unify the high-school system, bringing these schools partly under state control and securing a closer articulation with the institutions of higher education. It has lately been adopted in Pennsylvania and other states, and is certain to be an important factor in working out the problem under discussion.

5. *Free attendance of country pupils at existing public high schools*, under legislation providing for the approval of such schools and compensation for the districts maintaining them. This plan has been repeatedly suggested and discussed. It has been in operation for some years in a very successful form in Nebraska, where the law provides for tuition fees at a fixed rate, to be paid by the county in which the pupil resides. The Nebraska law encountered technical constitutional difficulties at first, but was reënacted immediately by the legislature without material alteration. It may still be found weak in some technical points since the lawmakers are blazing a new path without precedents; but its popularity and success insure its continuance under substantially its present form. The law includes in substance the following provisions:

a. Free attendance of non-resident pupils at any approved high school in the same county, or in a different county if it be the nearest to the pupil's place of residence.

b. The state department of education determines annually what schools are properly equipped and subject to such attendance. This provision has enabled the state department to exercise a most helpful influence upon the equipment and management of the high schools.

c. Tuition fees at the fixed rate of three dollars per month are paid by the county in which the pupil resides.

d. Pupils must have the county superintendent's certificate that they have completed satisfactorily the course of study prescribed by the state department for the elementary grades. This clause has been found to supply an exceedingly valuable lever for grading and improving the country schools. Thus the law incidentally tones up the whole state system of education, preparing for higher education, regulating and strengthening the high schools, and stimulating the work in the rural schools.

We have endeavored to outline the various plans which seem to promise solutions for our problem of free secondary instruction for rural pupils. Two or more of these may be and frequently are employed together in the same state. Indeed, no one method alone can be considered as fully sufficient, although some of the plans enumerated have seemed, as for example in Minnesota and Nebraska, to provide almost immediately the means for free secondary instruction for any ambitious country pupil throughout an entire state. There seems to be no good reason why several of these plans should not be authorized by law in each state, in order to secure a solution best fitted to the needs of each locality, and yet offer immediate relief in some form for every ambitious and competent country student.

That the movement is one of importance scarcely needs argument. Many who may become the choice spirits of the next generation are hidden away undeveloped among these country children. "What could not Massachusetts afford to pay," remarked Dr. Harris, the United States Commissioner of Education, in a recent conversation, "to bring a Daniel Webster out of rural obscurity." The situation is of course modified somewhat by the low tuition rates charged in many sections in high schools, private normal schools and the preparatory departments of colleges. But with equal truth it could be said that private enterprise would partly provide for elementary education, also, were there no public provision. It may also be urged that the cost of tuition is small compared with that of board and other expenses which the pupils must bear. The answer is, first, the item of tuition will in many cases turn the scale in favor of high-school attendance; and in the second place, a free school, not free food

or clothing, is the American ideal. Here we draw the line between state and family functions. Certainly all arguments favorable to public high schools in cities, would have equal force when applied to the extension of free high-school privileges to the country districts.

HENRY R. CORBETT

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO